

To the Chairman and Members of the Hardingstone Rural District Council.

JANUARY, 1905.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Report for the year 1904, with the usual Tables. In estimating the population of the district for the year, I have assumed it to be stationary, for though seven cottages have been built at Hardingstone during the year, very little building has been carried on in other parts, and of late years, several cottages have been closed in Hardingstone for sanitary reasons.

The total number of births during the year was 162, giving a birth-rate of 20·6 per 1,000. This is quite the lowest number of births during the last ten years, the average for the ten years being 198, with a rate of 24 per 1,000; the lowest previous year was 1901, when there were 176 births. In the Brafield sub-district the births just reached the average, so that the deficiency must have occurred in the Hardingstone and Wootton districts, but as these are now joined for registration purposes, I cannot give the separate figures, though I have been able, with some trouble, to separate the death returns. Of these births, 70 were males and 92 females.

The number of deaths in children under one year of age was 24; this is a very high mortality, especially when the small number of births is taken into consideration. The number has on two occasions been as low as 11, and only twice in the last ten years has it exceeded 24, whilst the average is 18·7. This number of deaths gives a ratio per 1,000 births registered of 148, as compared with an average for the ten years of 93.

The total number of deaths at all ages was 118, whilst in each of the two previous years there were only 94 deaths, the average for the ten years being 113. This gives a death-rate of 15 per 1,000 for 1904, against an average of 13·7 for the previous ten years. There were 16 deaths in persons over 80 years of age, and one death was certified as 98.

Table II. gives the birth and death-rate in the various sub-districts for the last ten years. This shows that the infantile death-rate was above the average in each of the sub-districts, though more so in the Wootton district than in the others. The deaths in the Hardingstone and Brafield districts were rather below the average, but in the Wootton district the deaths were considerably above (42—35), and in the Workhouse the deaths were more than double the average—12 deaths having occurred there against an average of 5·5 for the ten years. One death is registered from small pox, but this occurred in a child removed from the town to the Northampton Urban Small Pox Hospital, which is situated in the parish of Hardingstone; this death consequently has nothing to do with this district.

Table III. shows the number of infectious cases notified during the year. This gives a total of 90 cases compared with 7 in 1903, 47 in 1902, 57 in 1901, and 30 in 1900. This large number is due entirely to the wide-spread epidemic of scarlet fever, which has prevailed in these parts during the year, no less than 71 of this total being due to scarlet fever. This disease has been universal in the town of Northampton, so many cases having occurred, that it has been impossible to isolate them all, and in this respect, it has been obliged to be left alone to burn itself out. Most of our villages closely surround the town, and there is much intercourse between them, so that it would have been very strange if we had not suffered from this epidemic, and in almost every case I have been able to trace the first case in a village to some contact with the town infection. The numbers, however, have varied much, and in a manner difficult to explain. Thus, in the Wootton district, not a single case was notified, though many men living in Wootton work in Northampton, going backwards and forwards daily. In the Brafield district, 55 cases were notified entirely in the three villages of Little Houghton, Brafield, and Yardley Hastings; whilst in the Hardingstone district, 16 were notified almost entirely from Piddington and Preston Deanery. Of these 71 cases, 57 were

treated in the Infectious Hospital at Hardingstone, and no deaths occurred here, in fact, the epidemic has been a very mild one, and only one death altogether has been registered from it—a child dying at Brafield very early at the outset of the disease. Two other out-district cases were also treated in the Hospital—one from Northampton, when isolation for private reasons was very imperative, and the Borough Hospital was so crowded that it could not be taken in there—the other from Dallington, at the Honble. R. Spencer's special request, who also kindly promised to defray all expenses connected with it.

Concerning the other notified cases, the case of Diphtheria occurred in the cottages connected with the Hunsbury Hill Furnaces, and on investigation, it was found that their well had failed, and not only the cottages, but the men working at the furnaces were getting their supply of drinking water from anywhere that was handy, even sending for it to the canal close by. The case was only reported last month, but the proprietors of the works have promised temporarily to cart drinking water to supply all these parts, and to at once set to work to find a fresh and pure supply.

The eight cases of croup broke out at Roade where 5 children were attacked, and the malady was traced to drinking impure water; two cases happened at the same time at Courteenhall, but they had been in contact with these first cases, so doubtless caught the disease from them. I regret to say that two of these cases proved fatal.

The case of enteric fever was reported from Hardingstone, and was due to the patient drinking impure water from a surface well in her garden. There was not the least necessity for drinking such water, in fact, all the people in Hardingstone have been warned not to drink from their surface wells as a good supply of water is laid on in this village, and there was a tap within a very few yards of this cottage. On the other hand I do not like to close such wells, as they are of unquestionable use in augmenting our supply if used for cleaning and flushing purposes only, and in the case of a dry summer it might not be possible to do without them. The case of puerperal fever occurred at Milton, and, unfortunately, was quickly fatal from hyperpyrexia. She was attended by a doctor, and the disease did not spread. No case of puerperal fever attended by a midwife has been notified during the year.

The Schools at Yardley Hastings and Brafield have been closed on account of scarlet fever.

The Schools at Wootton and Quinton have been closed on account of an epidemic of measles at these two villages. I regret to say that the epidemic was a very severe one, and two deaths were registered from it, or twice as many deaths from this as from scarlet fever, though there were many more cases of the latter.

There is no doubt that measles lately has been a more intractable disease than scarlet fever, and this fact has been noted in other sanitary districts.

One case of small pox was recorded in the case of a man residing at Far Cotton in the Northampton Urban District, who worked at Hunsbury Hill Furnaces, and consequently several men who lived in our villages, and had worked with him whilst even the rash was upon him were exposed to the contagion. The usual measures were taken—vaccination, isolation, &c.—and no further spread of the disease happened.

Table IV. shows the causes of and ages at death during the year. As I have already remarked on the deaths from infectious disease there is little more that calls for comment. There were 3 deaths from diarrhœa in children under one year of age, 10 deaths from tubercular disease, 10 deaths from cancer, 9 from various pulmonary diseases, and 18 (rather a large number) from heart disease.

WATER SUPPLY.

The Denton supply, which was opened last year, has proved quite satisfactory, and is now about to be laid on to the schools, which will render them much more efficient from a sanitary point of view. The plans for supplying Brafield with water are now in the hands of Mr. Green, and are being carried out but are not yet finished; a considerable time seems to have been wasted over this small scheme, and it ought before this to have been in working order. The water supply at Hardingstone still proves very efficient, and there have been no complaints this summer of shortness of water at Wootton since the new pumps have been erected.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

The main sewage scheme for Yardley Hastings has been completed, the old cesspools have been abolished, and the pumping apparatus to pump the water on the land is at work. All the private drains, however, have not yet been connected with the main drain, and at my visit early last month, the brook was still in a most filthy state. There are many complaints also about the smell from this sewer, and in my opinion more ventilators of a larger calibre will have to be introduced. The sewage farm at Brafield has been working well, and there are no complaints now about the smells in the village since more ventilators have been provided. At Cooknoe, a septic tank has been constructed from plans by Messrs. Sharman & Archer, of Wellingboro', at present it seems working satisfactorily, and it is hoped that it will meet the requirements of the County Council in preventing the pollution of the river which previously happened. Speaking for myself I am pleased to see that your Council are adopting the plan of septic tanks, I believe they are more scientific, will prove more efficient and much more economical than the present irrigation farms. I have visited the fellmongering business at Rush Mills with Mr. Paget during the year. We found storm sewage still polluting the river and advised a small irrigation plot with under drainage to be laid out so as to take off the storm water and excess of sewage. Other building operations have been carried out here and a road has been constructed, altogether a great improvement has been made, and the smells that were formerly so noticeable from these works have been much less intense. In consequence of complaints about the smell from the sewers, extra ventilators have been erected in the villages of Milton, Hardingstone and Roade, and these have effected much improvement in this respect. It is a great pity that Surveyors do not put in such ventilators as part of their scheme as they are absolutely necessary.

DAIRIES AND COWSHEDS ACT.

These have been visited during the year, and a great improvement has been made. Some are quite modern and in a first-class condition, whilst the others have been greatly improved.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS ACT.

These hardly exist in this district. There are three small boot factories all in good order, and the few workshops (an average of about two to each village) are all in a clean state. Under the circumstances, the paternal care of the Home Office in insisting on the filling up of a most long and complicated form seems to me simply ridiculous. The bakehouses are all clean and in good order—the provision as to regular white-washing is strictly insisted on. There are no underground bakehouses.

VARIOUS.

At present no case has required our care under the New Midwives' Act, but as we have a most efficient Disinfector any case can be at once treated should such arise.

Three new cottages have been erected at Cooknoe, seven at Hardingstone, two at Hackleton, two at Horton, two at Yardley Hastings, and one at Roade.

One dilapidated cottage has been condemned and closed at Yardley Hastings.

One case of overcrowding has been dealt with at Milton.

One License for horse-slaughtering has been granted, at a considerable distance from any dwelling.

I have again to acknowledge Mr. Abbott's valuable assistance during the year, and I am pleased to say that he has now finished the drainage plans for all the most important villages in the district.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

G. H. PERCIVAL, M.B.,

Medical Officer of Health.

